



Connecticut General Assembly's Commission on Equity & Opportunity
18-20 Trinity Street, Hartford, Connecticut

**Testimony from Werner Oyanadel, Senior Commission Analyst for the
Commission on Equity & Opportunity (CEO)**

Thursday, February 16th, 2017 ~ LOB Room 2C – 4:30 PM

*With Concerns Regarding H.B. No. 7027 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM
ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR.*

Good afternoon Senators Osten & Formica, Rep. Walker and all honorable members of the *Appropriations Committee* of the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA). My name is Werner Oyanadel, Senior Commission Analyst for the CGA's Commission on Equity and Opportunity (CEO). I am here today with serious concerns regarding H.B. No. 7027 "AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR"

For the record the mission of the CEO is to inform and engage all policy makers about constituent needs for the African American, Asian American, Pacific Islanders, and Latino and Puerto Rican populations in Connecticut. We are a nonpartisan agency with a data driven, cross-cultural approach to policy innovation and our primary focus – again – is to recommend legislation that aims at eliminating disparities by creating opportunities, building connections and promoting social change.

The Governor recommended consolidating and reducing funding by 20% under the Department of Social Services (DSS) Human Services Infrastructure (HIS) through the Community Action Program account for the next biennium, which our agency highly opposes and urges the Appropriations Committee to oppose as well. This consolidation will literally obliterate a number of efficient safety net services, teen pregnancy prevention programs, and fatherhood initiatives among a number of programs helping our growing Latino, African American, & Asian populations in our urban centers (particularly Latino populations in our state). A new 20% reduction sounds like a reasonable reduction; however, every year these agencies get a similar reduction that when added up adversely affects their sustainability and in some cases it will unfortunately mean closure of some programs. These funds represent a lifeline to our racial & ethnic communities, which historically have been denied the resources that many other Connecticut citizens take for granted. Their work strengthens communities of color and enhances economic self-sufficiency, which in turn lightens the burdens of government and taxpayers in our state. While we agree that cuts are sorely needed in order to make the state's budget much leaner and provide for a balanced budget, we strongly oppose balancing our budget on the back of the most vulnerable populations in Connecticut. Therefore, we strongly believe that a more surgical and strategic approach to balancing the budget will be required moving forward.

For the record, CEO also opposes the Governor's recommendation to implement an annual cap on benefits under the adult dental program. This proposal may be in line with the standard practice of phased dental care for individuals requiring extensive treatment, but the recommended \$1,000 benefit limit is well below the actual cost of these types of treatments that racial and ethnic groups in our state with limited incomes can't afford.



We look forward for the Appropriations Committee to recommend a budget that reflects the fiscal reality but takes into consideration the effects of such changes to our working families and agencies that assist underserved – vulnerable – racial and ethnic populations in our state. Again keep in mind that many of these agencies/programs keep receiving budgetary annual reductions and that the overall state investment on these programs represents less than 0.001 percent of the overall state budget.

It is within this context that we urge your opposition on these previously mentioned areas accordingly and extend our offer to help the Appropriations Committee and the Governor's Office with our expertise on the subject to advance culturally and linguistically appropriate fiscal policies that benefit everyone in the State of Connecticut.

Thank you.